

Dungeon Intimacies: The Poetics of Transsexual Sadomasochism

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1. Site Survey

From Bernal Heights, the city of San Francisco spreads north and west, a slow-moving accretion in steel and glass, brick and concrete, of the human desire unleashed and focused upon this terrain by the gold rush of 1848 – an alchemical transformation of precious metal into philosopher’s stone upon which I sit and think.

Ian sits behind me on the grassy slope, her fingers anchored into my shoulders, her thumb expertly digging at the lump of knotted muscle between shoulder blade and spine where my keystroking and mousing actions accumulate. We’ve scarcely seen each other these past fifteen years, and never known each other well, in the ways that conventionally count as knowing someone well. But since she’s been back we’ve fallen into a practical familiarity with one another’s bodies, rooted in our shared history of a particular subculture at a particular place and time, that I think of as our ‘dungeon intimacy’.

The physical landscape is made of memories. Over there, to the right, a few hundred feet away, Del shot Cooper for the cover of *The Drag King Book*.¹ Extending my line of sight past that point toward the city’s eastern bay shore I see the place by the abandoned steel foundry where Texas Tomboy and Monika Treut filmed some scenes for *Gendernauts*.² Turning my head counter-clockwise I see the live-work lofts near the Bay Bridge where Ian and I once watched Raelyn pierce and cut Cathy Opie for one of her bloody self-portraits. There’s my house, down at the foot of Bernal Hill, where my partner and I now live. Ian, after years in New York, now lives with her family over there in Marin, north across the Golden Gate. We point out to each other various places we’ve each lived since the 1980s: around Berkeley and Oakland in the East Bay; Potrero Hill and half a dozen places in the Mission District here in the city. She says she’s sat in this very spot before, smoking pot with our friend Edward, back when she helped him run the LINKS S/M play parties, which I attended regularly for several years.

Off in the middle distance, west of downtown and south of Market Street, stands a large brick building – a fortress, really – built in Moorish Revival style, complete with crenelated turrets and deeply recessed apertures in the thick walls, from which cannons and rifles could be fired. It is the old San Francisco National Guard armoury, on Mission Street at 14th.³ We are both historians, Ian and I, who have been taught to encounter the space around us in four dimensions, extending our observations into

patterns longer than our lived experience. There is Mission Dolores, established by Spanish priests in 1776, and its counterpart the Presidio, a garrison farther to the west, near the mouth of the bay where the ships come in from the sea. Together they formed the original instruments of California's conquest and colonization, one housing church, and the other, army. Behind us, at the crest of Bernal Hill, is a small military telecommunications facility, a nondescript little cinderblock building sprouting metal appurtenances, humming low behind a chain-link fence and padlocked gate. It forms part of the current martial occupation and organization of the space we now inhabit.

The armoury occupies an intermediate timespace framed and inflected by these maximal and minimal fixed points in temporal distance within the present built environment; it is the materialized remnant of its own distinctive meshwork of force relations, its own constitutive logics of movement, investment and territory.⁴ Constructed in the years just prior to World War I, the structure addressed itself to the labour upheavals of late nineteenth century industrial capitalism, to a tradition of urban mass protests, and to lingering memories of civil war. In housing troops and weapons whose function was to suppress popular insurrection and maintain government control over city streets, the armoury enacted a shift in military attention – management of domestic populations supplanted the threat of coastal invasion. Its massive battlements point back in time toward the Presidio, but its placement in the mixed residential-commercial working-class neighbourhood surrounding Mission Dolores anticipated the contemporary biopolitical surveillance state.

A block and a half up 14th Street from the armoury is the House of the Golden Bull, where the LINKS play-parties took place, starting in 1989. The armoury itself had been vacant since 1976, and its state of disrepair mirrored the surrounding neighbourhood. Multi-story houses built for multi-generational families around the turn of the last century had gone derelict in the post-World War II flight to the suburbs, and some, like the Golden Bull, had been snatched up by gay men with an eye for abandoned architecture. The Mission district abutted the homocentric Castro neighbourhood and functioned, in its northwesterly extremes, as a spill-over zone for populations marginal to the gay male society that had rooted there in the 1960s. A women's enclave had formed in the Mission in the 1970s, a few blocks southeast of the armoury, around Valencia Street between 18th and 22nd, while the epicenter of the city's leather scene had been on the armoury's northern side, in the South of Market district along Folsom Street's 'Miracle Mile'. Competition for land closer to downtown had driven the leather zone southwesterly, toward the Mission, for three decades by the early 1990s. The Catacombs, one of the city's most storied dungeon spaces, had been located a few blocks south of the armoury on Shotwell at 17th. The Catacomb's sudden closure in 1989 contributed to the rise of the Golden Bull as an S/M party venue.⁵

The Golden Bull occupied the geographical margins of three urban zones, each characterized by distinct sexual subcultural formations and social movements – homosexuality and gay liberation, the women's movement and lesbian feminism, and the *ars erotica* of consensual sadomasochism. The property valuations of its physical site reflected the fallowness of its location in the overarching ecology of the city. The view

from the back deck overlooked a disintegrating public housing project; its immediate neighbours were an edgy gay-owned art gallery, the dyke-run Black and Blue Tattoo, and The Bearded Lady Truckstop Café, where underground performance artist Harriet Dodge and the lesbian punk band Tribe 8 held court. Pioneers of the pierced and tatted subcultural aesthetic shared street space (and sometimes substance-use habits and job descriptions) with the neighbourhood's many junkies and sex-workers. The LINKS parties occupied a slice of time as precisely sited as their real estate. The AIDS pandemic was in full swing in those years before the anti-viral cocktails, and S/M seemed situated at the very crux of the crisis – its precepts of negotiation and consent, its panoply of techniques for eliciting bodily sensation without exchanging bodily fluids, its meticulous disarticulations of erotics from genital sexuality, all promised a viable future.

It was to dungeons such as the Golden Bull that Michel Foucault referred when he noted that, 'you find emerging in places like San Francisco and New York what might be called laboratories of sexual experimentation.'⁶ The dungeon, I'll suggest, in the pages that follow, is indeed just such a productive and transformative space as a laboratory – a space not merely for the discovery of an existing objective world but a playground, workshop or place of study that is in fact a generative space, one facilitative of the materialization of creatively grasped virtualities. It is *place as process*: or, in geographer Doreen Massey's words, place as a distinctive mixture, 'gathering, and manifestation of local and global social, economic, and communications relations' that knot themselves up together for a length of time, and which become concretized in the objects that collectively constitute their place by assembling there.⁷

Judith Halberstam points out that Massey offers to queer theorists of embodiment, sexuality and gender an alternative to the views of other postmodern geographers such as Dennis Harvey and Edward Soja who privilege 'the global' and distrust 'the local' as place-bound, reactionary and potentially fascist in its parochial distance from all things cosmopolitan.⁸ No place can be more local than the body. Within systems of thought which have a vested interest in ignoring the inescapable fact that even the most global analysis is tied to the particular (raced, sexed, classed, educated) body of the analyst who conceives it (because not to do so would unmask its enabling privileges), no place is shunted to the periphery of consideration with greater alacrity than is the body. Reconceptualizing every place, including the lived space of the body, as a 'glocal' hybrid opens an important line of critical inquiry. As sociologist Avery Gordon points out, 'we have become adept at discovering the construction of social realities and deconstructing their architecture', but in telling the stories of these realities, we have not yet taken as seriously as we should the insight 'that the intricate web of connections that characterize any event or problem *is the story*.'⁹

Transsexual sadomasochism incarnates the processes within and through which the body materializes the specificity of its location, installing the body that practices it as a place – one as contingent, situated and real as any armoury or repurposed Victorian house. In offering this autoethnographic account of embodied knowledges (and knowledges of embodiment) produced in a particular dungeon space, neighbourhood

and historical moment, through my own past practices of transsexual sadomasochism, my intent is not to attribute any particular importance to certain events simply because I, rather than someone else, participated in them. The goal, rather, is to open a critical space within which subjectively perceived phenomenological experiences can offer evidence for more widely applicable statements about the relationship between embodied subject and material environment. I offer these observations in the spirit of ‘pornosophy’ – Shannon Bell’s apt coinage for the militant insistence on an epistemic parity between the disparate knowledges of the scientist, the philosopher and the whore – and as a refusal to discredit what our own carnality can teach us.¹⁰

2. Topoanalysis and Rhythmoanalysis

Transsexual sadomasochism in dungeon space enacts a *poesis* (an act of artistic creation) that collapses the boundary between the embodied self, its world and others, allowing one to interpenetrate the others and thereby constitute a specific place. It gestures toward the metaphysical counter-scheme that haunts the margins of Western dualistic thought, wherein ‘the duality of subject and object’, in the words of philosopher of science Gaston Bachelard, becomes ‘iridescent, shimmering, unceasingly active in its inversions.’¹¹

‘We are the diagrams of the functions of inhabiting’ the spaces where we have lived intimately, Bachelard writes in *The Poetics of Space*, his classic work on the experience of inhabiting the felicitous spaces we designate with concepts of ‘home’; ‘The word habit is too worn a word to express this passionate liaison of our bodies, which do not forget’, with these unforgettable spaces of our inhabitation.¹² Bachelard calls for a two-fold approach to spatial poetics: a ‘topoanalysis’, conceived as an auxiliary to psychoanalysis, that offers ‘a systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives’,¹³ and its complement, a ‘rhythmoanalysis’ that accounts for the reiterative temporal practices – habitual movements – through which we inhabit those sites. He is particularly concerned with the fluctuating movement between the ‘real’ and the ‘unreal’ whose dynamic interlacings produce the shimmering iridescence of poetic reverie, or common daydreaming. Bachelard shares with his psychoanalytic contemporaries Laplanche and Pontalis a concept of fantasy as inhabited structure (and of structure as inhabited fantasy).¹⁴ Space as he conceives it is simultaneously phantasmatic and material, furnishable with variable contents both psychical and tangible, and within which it is possible to change positions as one would move about a house.

A hundred people or more might pack the Golden Bull for a well-attended LINKS party. One could not enter without an invitation. On party nights, one approached the grated street-level door, where a monitor checked the name you gave against the RSVP list. One then proceeded up a flight of stairs and through another door to an anteroom off the entrance hall, where one paid the cover charge, checked one’s coat and, if need be, changed one’s clothes. One then passed through a kitchen and living room out to the deck, where one set of stairs led up to the owner’s private floor and another set led down to the labyrinthine dungeon. One room held a waterbed, another a jail cell, and yet others mattresses, racks, crosses, ropeworks and suspension hooks,

with conveniently situated hardware screwed into the walls and ceilings. A bathroom was reserved for piss play, scat and blood sports. Sharps containers emblazoned with biohazard warning labels were placed in visible locations in every room, as were copious amounts of condoms and lube. Safety monitors kept an eye out for trouble, and medical care providers were on-site in case of emergency. Drugs and alcohol were not allowed. Mirrors and Day-Glo graffiti covered the unfinished drywalls. It was there in the dungeon that I first met Ian, sometime around 1991.

Coupling, though tolerated with a certain libertarian aplomb, was not the dominant mode of interpersonal relationship in the dungeon. The general ethos of the space favoured a respectful openness to spontaneous liaisons, improvised orchestrations and serendipitous multiplicities – like a cocktail party without drinks where the conversations were pantomimed in leather, or a jam session around the edges of which a solo jazz musician might hover before joining in. This made the dungeon a welcoming and convivial place, where one was encouraged to encounter fellow creatures with a sense of wonder and curiosity, with patience rather than judgment. Every person became for others a unique opportunity for the universe to reveal itself from a slightly different perspective – and some of the views were stunning.

The carefully curated guest list favoured those unlikely to fit into other, more rule-bound and identity-defined, dungeon spaces – it was neither gender-segregated nor compulsorily heterosexual; it honoured those who abided by the customs of ‘old leather’ and carried its inherited wisdom, while celebrating freeform experimentation that broke with traditional subcultural knowledge and practice. LINKS, as its name suggested, forged connections where they otherwise might not have existed. I first encountered there the word *queer*, as it since has come to be used in academic and community discourse, in chill-out conversations after dungeon sessions, in the summer of 1990. We used it to name the previously unnamed social formation taking shape at our parties, which we saw as part of a larger political and conceptual shift in identity-based social movements, related to the AIDS crisis and, a few months later, to anti-Gulf War activism. ‘Transgender’ was a word I first encountered on a flyer advertising a LINKS ‘Gender Play Party’, early in 1991. For most of us there, gender was something we explored, analyzed and experimented with in the context of a broader engagement with bodily practices and power; people came at questions of gender from many different angles and emotional investments, with no one right way to proceed. Since the 1990s, considerable ink has been spilled about the relationship between queer and transgender, transgender and transsexual, transgender and genderqueer. For me, these things were linked at the outset.

I wander one night into the dungeon’s back room to find a writhing young body upright and spread-eagled, lashed naked to an X-shaped Saint Andrew’s Cross, its head shaved, its scalp encircled with a garland of temporary hypodermic-needle piercings through which a fine steel wire had been woven and tightened into a ‘crown of thorns’. Blood trickled down its face in an art-historical *tableau vivant* of martyrdom and plucked arhythmically onto a plastic drop-cloth. A woman faced the young body, checking its pulse and respiration with a latex-gloved hand, wiping the proverbial blood, sweat and tears from its eyes and giving it occasional sips of water. Two others whom I happened to know were administering a thorough flogging. One was visibly

tired – it had apparently been a long night. She gestured for me to take her place, and I stepped into the structure of the scene, surrendering myself to its established cadences.

Something serene and paradoxically solitary can be found in the experience of giving oneself over to the inhabitation and enactment of a shared pattern of motion – a contemplative solitude born of one’s ecstatic displacement into a space where the body actively receives and transmits the movements of others, allowing awareness to flit and alight throughout the transsubjective ensemble. A whip strikes flesh with sufficient force to blossom the creature’s skin red and welt it back toward the leather. The young thing moans a low moan, transforming the kinetic energy of the blow into an audible frequency by passing breath over slack vocal chords, and my attention is drawn toward the physicality of the assemblage we cohabit. ‘A child is being beaten’, no doubt, but my sense in the moment is that the Freudians, so invested in textual analyses and narrative outcomes, fail to grasp the philosophical-critical dimension of sadomasochistic practice when they approach it through the lens of oedipal sexuality.¹⁵ This is not, for me, primarily a sexual experience, and it is Freud’s contemporary Bergson, rather than Freud himself, who comes to mind.

In a passage of *Matter and Memory*, Bergson discusses the structure of the nervous system in the ‘animal series’ that extends (in his teleological schema) from the *monera* to *homo sapiens*, in which he observes that even as a simple mass of protoplasm, living matter is irritable and contractile, ‘open to the influence of external stimulation’, to which it reacts physically, chemically and mechanically. Stimulus/response is not an event structured by the boundary between inside and outside, between interior ‘self’ and external ‘other’, but is rather a continuous movement in which a force’s vector is prolonged and deflected into the movements of living matter; it is a wave transmitting itself through various media. As organisms become more complexly organized, specialized parts – nerve cells, sense organs, the musculo-skeletal system – divide physiological labour in ways that permit more varied response. At some point, a neural organ – the brain – introduces the possibility of voluntary movement rather than automatic organic responses.

Bergson understands the brain to introduce a difference of degree rather than kind. In a simple reflex action, a ‘peripheral excitation’ transmits a centripetal movement along an ‘afferent’ nerve toward the central neural processing organ, before transmitting itself centrifugally back along an ‘efferent’ nerve to ‘motor cells’ that direct the energy of the stimulus back into the environment and thus continue its movement in a new direction. It is the complex branching of neurons in the brain that allow for voluntary responses; quite physically, Bergson suggests, the possibility of choice of movements is at root the lived awareness of stimuli circulating with electro-chemical speed through multiple possible neural pathways in the brain, each of which can descend into a specific pattern of motor response. The brain, rather than having some ‘miraculous power’ to change sensory input into a ‘representation of things’ that can be symbolically manipulated, functions simply by introducing into the circulation of energetic flows through the body a duration, a time-lag (that is to say, more space) between the stimulus and response. Our consciousness of choice of movements in response to stimuli is nothing other than our inhabitation of a brainspace that holds the simultaneous presence of multiple potentials, each made possible by the physical

complexity and carrying capacity of the neural network, only one of which will be actualized, in a quantum-like leap to a particular one of many virtualities, through the material actions of our body.¹⁶

Whether Bergson's story can be recognized as true by today's cognitive scientists is beside the point: reflecting upon Bergson brings me to the place of *poesis*. I envision my body as a meeting point, a node, where external lines of force and social determination thicken into meat and circulate as movement back into the world. So much that constitutes me I did not choose, but, now constituted, I feel myself to be in a place of agency. I occupy a critical space, a distance between stimulus and response created by the complex social pathways converging in the dungeon, in which through my presence I gain the capacity to choose which patterns I will repeat, or which new patterns I might envision and enact. I invent new choreographies of space and time as I dance my whip across the creature's ass. It is not that I somehow internalize as my own the structure or content of the scene in which I participate, receiving its impression the way clay would receive a sculptor's mark. It is rather a proprioceptive awareness, as I flog, of the role of my body as medium in the circuit of transmissions, and of the material efficacy I possess in my subjective ability to choose one thing rather than another or to poetically imagine the shape of a new pattern. The imagination, Bachelard says, takes up its place here, 'exactly where the function of unreality comes to charm or to disturb – always to awaken – the sleeping being lost in its automatism.'¹⁷

Gender is a percussive symphony of automatism, reverberating through the space of our bodies before there is an awareness of awareness itself. Who can say why I heard its music the way I did? All I know is that from earliest memory I disliked being called 'he' and longed to be addressed as 'she'. I wanted to look like what I considered myself to be, and perceived that I was profoundly misplaced – all of which evoked in me the utter sadness of feeling irremediably lost and alone in a situation impossible to rectify. I was not where others looked for me, and I was where they saw me not. Lacan says that 'the real' is the place that is always returned to; these feelings were real. I am agnostic as to their origin. I did not choose them. I chose only how I would inhabit the architecture of their affect.

For a long time, the little perceiving one who had been surprised to find, while still so very young, that it related to its place of habitation in a manner quite different than others whom it knew, remained quietly observant. It first encountered another to dwell with it in the awareness of its difference in the nineteenth year of its body's extrauterine life. My girlfriend and I had just finished fucking and I was stretching next to our bed like a well-fed cat when I felt a pinch on my left buttock. Without turning around or looking down, I swatted vigorously at what I thought were my girlfriend's fingers. As it turned out, she had leaned over to bite me playfully on my ass-cheek; my slap caught her perfectly on the side of the face and sent her reeling across the room. She was sobbing, and I was mortified that I had hurt her. But what eventually became clear, through her tears and my guilty self-recriminations, was that she had found it terribly exciting that I had hit her, and a secret history of desire began spilling forth. She wondered if I might not do it again. In all honesty I had never even dreamed of doing such things to another person – but just as honestly, I also have to say that something

previously unnamed and unrecognized in me did not hesitate to answer ‘yes’. And so it was that I felt obliged to offer her the gift of a reciprocal vulnerability, and invited her into a realm of feelings I had always occupied without companionship. After a pregnant pause she replied, ‘The hardest thing about asking you to hit me was overcoming the fear of being hit by a man.’

Cut to: 1991, a decade later, and S/M had become for me what it was for many of the people who shared dungeon space at LINKS parties – a technology for the production of (trans)gendered embodiment, a mechanism for dismembering and disarticulating received patterns of identification, affect, sensation and appearance, and for reconfiguring, coordinating and remapping them in bodily space. I could hear people use names and pronouns in reference to me that I could agree to answer to. I could feel the touch upon my body of clothes that encouraged certain modes of comportment or stylized manners of moving, clothing that gendered me in the act of wearing them. In dungeon space I could see a woman in the mirror, and step into the place of woman in the structure of another’s desire, to witness those bodily signs – the heaves and shudders and seeping fluids – that attested to my viable occupation of that fantasized place for them.

There are those who say that magic is the art and science of creating change in accordance with the will. Transsexual body modification is one such practice.¹⁸ It became the means through which I grasped a virtuality manifested in dungeon space and gave it a materiality capable of extending its effects beyond the dungeon walls. It is in such moments of magical transformation that, according to Bachelard, ‘the commitment of the imagining being is such that it no longer functions as the subject of the verb “to adapt oneself.”’ This is the moment of *poesis*, when that which has been grasped extends itself into the world, thereby transforming not only ‘the imagining being’, but others and the environment that holds them.

My arm tires and I take my turn supporting the young creature’s head, holding its eyes with mine, cradling it and attending to its bodily needs. Such are the intimate sites of queer reproduction. This moment of dungeon intimacy is but one of many over the years that collectively will conjure a new social reality. Deleuze is right to say that sadomasochism deromanticizes love and eroticizes the world.¹⁹ Later, hanging out in the kitchen, I learn that my playmate calls herself Ian and lives in the world as a woman. She was just beginning a PhD programme in United States history, at another campus of the same university where I was in the final stages of finishing mine. We ran around together for a while, whenever she was in town, until she moved to New York. Sometimes, in the years ahead, we would happen upon one another at academic conferences. Small world.

3. Reprise

From Bernal Heights, the city of San Francisco spreads over the land to the north and west, a slow-moving accretion in steel and glass, brick and concrete, of the human desire unleashed and focused upon this terrain by the famous gold rush of 1848 – an alchemical transformation of precious metal into philosopher’s stone that thinks through me on it.

This landscape is made of memories. Much of what I knew from the early '90s is now gone. That community dispersed for all the usual reasons: death, whimsy, jobs, familial obligations. The dot-com boom came in on top of that, property values rising like a tsunami that washed people away, across the Bay towards Oakland, or to the Sierra foothills, or over the mountains entirely and far away. It was a force of nature, and the space filled back in different than it had been before. I see the armoury, enormous Gay Pride rainbow flags flying from its turrets. It was purchased late in 2006 by Kink.com, an S/M internet porn site that had started shooting its own movies, needed more studio space, and loved the building's faux-Moorish interior stonework and sound-stage-sized troop assembly rooms. Kink.com is a quintessentially San Franciscan kind of porn business – it provides safe working conditions, pays its workers well, and generously gives back to the neighbourhood and the S/M community. And yet as it streams its dematerialized digital media images onto the World Wide Web, it supplies an image of the new relations between space and life now being materialized in the fabric of the city, and enacts the relentless commodification and privatization of all we know.²⁰

I wonder aloud about the space of my own body and the practices that have installed it here. I want to claim that transsexual sadomasochism affords me a glimpse of non-unique revolutionary potentials – exemplifying the materially productive effects of extending and prolonging into the world poetically generated patterns of response to external conditions, demonstrating how body modification can become a site of social transformation, proving that the real can be materialized differently than it now is or once was. Ian points toward the armoury, and reminds me that all present materializations become relics, and that nothing prevents their capture by normativizing processes, or their absorption in to the stream of commodities. She wonders if perhaps I am being sentimental, or nostalgic. Perhaps, but that's not how it feels.

A work by the avant-garde genderqueer performance group Antony and the Johnsons comes to mind, 'The Cripple and the Starfish'.²¹ I have it on my iPod, and Ian and I share an earbud apiece to listen to Antony, in the role of the titular cripple, sing of a sadomasochistic love:

It's true I always wanted love to be hurtful
And it's true I always wanted love to be filled with pain and bruises ...

And there's no rhyme or reason
I'm changing like the seasons
Watch! I'll even cut off my finger
It will grow back like a Starfish!

I am very happy
So please hit me
I am very very happy
So come on hurt me

I'll grow back like a Starfish

I am moved, from my post-operative transsexual perspective, by the singer's plaintive association of amputation with the yearning for a transformation of affect. In the song, the (fantasy of the) self-inflicted bodily wound functions to create a space of subjective fulfillment. The empty space of the missing digit is produced, through an act of evacuation, as a space of regeneration. That space, being void and not filled, allows for the movement of desire into it. It is thus not memberlessness itself that is desired, but the subjective experience of transformative growth in which absence becomes the space of possibility.

In that the amputation of the member produces a space of actualization, it functions as *chora* – an ancient Greek concept with the double meaning of both an enclosed space and the act of enclosing, which figured prominently in Plato's cosmogony and which has become a contested site in feminist poststructuralist reworkings of the western philosophical tradition. In Plato's *Timaeus*, the *chora* is as his phallogocentric philosophy imagines the womb to be, a passive vessel for the active male elements from which the world is formed. Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Elizabeth Grosz and others have emphasized the active function of enclosing, holding and containing to assert the positive contribution of the *chora* in the process of generation as a space generative of movement that spills forth from containment.²²

From my forward-facing perspective I look back on my body as a psychically bounded space or container that becomes energetically open through the break of its surface – a rupture experienced as interior movement, a movement that becomes generative as it encloses and invests in a new space, through a perpetually reiterative process of growing new boundaries and shedding abandoned materialities: a mobile, membranous, temporally fleeting and provisional sense of enfolding and enclosure. This is the utopian space of my ongoing poesis.

The August sun is further west in the sky. Ian removes my iPod earbud and decides she needs to leave for home immediately to beat the traffic back across the bridge. We amble downhill toward house and car, chattering about the mundane details of the remainder of our respective days. She has to cook dinner and stay home with her kid while her partner goes to an art class, but that's all right because she's chairing her department this year and has a lot of administrative crap to catch up on. I'm meeting my son and his girlfriend in Oakland for *anime* and sushi, then coming home for a late night hot-tub-and-cocktails date with my partner before heading off to bed. I've accepted a visiting professorship in Vancouver this coming academic year, and find my moments with her already suffused with a longing that extended absence shortly will bring. Tomorrow I really need to finish an overdue article, because the editor is breathing down my neck. Ian and I hug our fond goodbyes, and kiss with a dungeon intimacy.²³

Our bodies are spaces set in motion, motions set in space: what trace of their generative locations do these mobile architectures make as they extend into the world?

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¹ Del LaGrace Volcano and Judith 'Jack' Halberstam, *The Drag King Book* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999).

² *Gendernauts: A Journey Through Shifting Identities*. Dir. Monika Treut (Hyena Films, 1999). DVD: First Run Features 2006.

³ On the Amoury see Gretchen Till, *Space of Reception*, Masters Thesis in Architecture (University of California, Berkeley, 2006), and Benjamin Shermatta, *Mission armoury*, Masters Thesis in Architecture (University of California, Berkeley, 2001).

⁴ On the framing and inflection of architectural space see Bernard Cache, *Earth Moves: The Furnishing of Territories* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

⁵ Charting the queer geography of San Francisco is a work in progress; much of this commentary is drawn from personal knowledge, and from unpublished data in the 'Sites Database', at the GLBT Historical Society (www.glbthistory.org). See Pat Califia, 'San Francisco: Revisiting the City of Desire', in *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Spaces, and Sites of Resistance*, ed. Anne-Marie Bouthillette, Yolanda Retter, Gordon Brent Ingram (Seattle: Bay Press, 1997), pp.177–96; Gayle Rubin, *The Valley of the Kings: Leathermen in San Francisco, 1960–1990*, PhD Dissertation, Anthropology (University of Michigan, 1994); and Susan Stryker, 'How the Castro Became San Francisco's Gay Neighbourhood', in *Out in the Castro: Desire, Promise, Activism*, ed. Winston Leyland (San Francisco: Leyland Publications, 2002), pp.29–34.

⁶ Michel Foucault, 'Sexual Choice, Sexual Act: An Interview with Michel Foucault', *Salmagundi* 58–59 (1982–83), pp.10–24 (pp.19–20); Whitney Davis, 'History and the Laboratory of Sexuality', *Foucault at Berkeley: Twenty Years Later*, a Symposium at the Townsend Center for the Humanities/Institute for European Studies, 16 October 2004, <<http://arthistory.berkeley.edu/davis/Foucault.pdf>>.

⁷ Doreen Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place', in *Studying Culture: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Anne Gray and Jim McGuigan (New York: Edward Arnold, 1993), pp.232–40 (p.240).

⁸ Judit Halberstam, *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: NYU Press, 2005), p.12.

⁹ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p.20, emphasis in original;

cited in Horacio N. Rocque Ramirez, 'A Living Archive of Desire: Teresita La Campesina and the Embodiment of Queer Latino Community Histories', in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Chapel Hill, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), pp.111–35 (p.117).

¹⁰ Shannon Bell, 'Fast Feminism', *Journal of Contemporary Thought*, 14 (Winter 2001), pp.93–112.

¹¹ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* [1958], trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p.xxxv.

¹² Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p.15.

¹³ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p.8.

¹⁴ Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, 'Fantasme originaire, fantasme des origines, origine du fantasme' [Fantasy and the origins of sexuality], *Les Temps Modernes* 215 (1964), pp.1833–68. Reprinted in Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan, eds, *Formations of Fantasy* (London: Methuen, 1986).

¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, "'A Child is Being Beaten': A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions' [1919], in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), vol. 17, pp.175–204.

¹⁶ Henri Bergson, 'Matter and Memory' [1896], in *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, ed. Keith Pearson and John Mullarky (New York: Continuum, 2002), pp.93–94.

¹⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, p.xxxv.

¹⁸ Loren Cameron, *Body Alchemy* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1995).

¹⁹ Gilles Deleuze, 'Coldness and Cruelty', in Gilles Deleuze, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and Jean McNeill, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty and Venus in Furs* (Cambridge, MA: Zone), pp.9–123.

²⁰ Robin Rinaldi, 'The New Pornographers', <<http://www.7x7sf.com/people/profiles/3545792.html>>.

²¹ Antony and the Johnsons, 'The Cripple and the Starfish', *Antony and the Johnsons* (Duturo, 2000).

²² Elizabeth Grosz, 'Women, Chora, Dwelling', in *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp.111–24; Judith Butler, 'Irigary/Plato', in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.36–49; Zoë Sophia, 'Container Technologies', *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, 15:2 (2000), pp.181–219.

²³ I am reminded of an article by Carolyn Dinshaw, who, in commenting on the queerness of the kiss between Gawain and Bertilak in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, noted how the heteronormative text is

‘preoccupied with keeping the depths and fissures’ of queerness ‘from bursting forth’ from the men’s kiss, as its words labour ‘to limit the significance of its signs, the nature of its characters, [and] the meanings of their actions’, in order to reduce a ‘polyvalent sign’ to ‘monovalent meaning.’ It is precisely the queer work of producing polyvalent meanings from ‘dungeon intimacies’ that I hope my actions may accomplish. Carolyn Dinshaw, ‘A Kiss Is Just a Kiss: Heterosexuality and Its Consolations in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight’, *Diacritics*, 24:2/3 (1994), pp.204–26 (p.205).

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